GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINES
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6245
ANSWERED ON:06.05.2003
MINERAL RESERVES IN RESERVED FORESTS
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Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether reserved forests area and tribal areas are bestowed with precious minerals and metals wealth;

(b) if so, the details thereof, state-wise, mineral and metal-wise; and

(c) the action taken to explore and tap mineral resources from those areas?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS)

(a) Survey by Geological Survey of India suggests that forest and tribal areas in India have mineral potential.

(b) & (c) : The areas included in the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution (tribal areas) are notified in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. Almost the entire States of Chattisgarh and Jharkhand, and sizable mineral bearing areas of Orissa and Rajasthan are notified tribal areas. Most of these areas are also included in forest areas. Although mineral reserves are not separately estimated in terms of forest areas or tribal areas, it is indicated that in general the forest and tribal areas of India are rich in fuel minerals like coal, metallic minerals like bauxite, iron, zinc and lead. Besides, limestone, gypsum minerals are also available in such areas.

The National Mineral Policy, 1993, envisages that extraction and development of minerals are closely interlinked with other natural resources like land, water, air and forest. The areas in which minerals occur often have other resources presenting a choice of utilization of land. Some such areas are ecologically fragile and some are biologically rich. It is necessary to take comprehensive view to facilitate the choice or order of land use keeping in view the needs of development as well as needs of protecting the forests, environment and ecology. Both aspects have to be properly coordinated to facilitate and ensure a sustainable development of mineral resources in harmony with environment.

The mining statute provides for clearances from the Ministry of Environment and Forests from the environmental and forest angles before exploitation of minerals. Through constant dialogue with the Ministry of Environment and Forests, significant procedural simplifications in obtaining forest clearance and environmental clearance for mining activities have come about. This includes the procedure to be followed for renewal of mining leases and the simplification of the forms. The environment and forestry related issues get discussed in various forums like meetings of the Mineral Advisory Council, Conference of State Ministers of Mining and Geology and Investor meets. The Ministry of Mines constantly interacts with the Ministry of Environment and Forests on the action points arising out of these meetings.